

**BARTON VILLAGE ANNUAL MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024**

In accordance with the foregoing notice, the legal voters of the Village of Barton, Vermont convened at the time and location specified in the warning. Clerk Shelia Martin called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Article 1:** Elect a Moderator for one year.

Regina Lyon nominated Jacqueline Laurion as Moderator. Leonidas Zenonos made a motion that nominations cease and the Clerk be instructed to cast one ballot for Jacqueline Laurion for Moderator, seconded by Paul Sicard. The motion carried and Jacqueline Laurion was elected Moderator for a one-year term.

Jacqueline Laurion stated that the Trustees wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the tragic passing of Sidney Cornell, a retired Village employee.

**Article 2:** Elect the following Officers:

Clerk for a one-year term  
Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a one-year term  
Treasurer for a one-year term  
Trustee for a three-year term

Regina Lyon nominated Shelia Martin for the office of Clerk. A motion was made by Leonidas Zenonos that nominations cease and the Moderator be instructed to cast one ballot for Shelia Martin for Clerk, seconded by Susan Penharlow. The motion carried and Shelia Martin was elected Clerk for the ensuing year.

Regina Lyon nominated Shelia Martin for the office of Collector of Delinquent Taxes. A motion was made by Leonidas Zenonos that nominations cease and the Moderator be instructed to cast one ballot for Shelia Martin for Collector of Delinquent Taxes, seconded by Antoinne Eubanks. The motion carried and Shelia Martin was elected Collector of Delinquent Taxes for the ensuing year.

Regina Lyon nominated Shelia Martin for the office of Treasurer. A motion was made by Regina Lyon that nominations cease and the Moderator be instructed to cast one ballot for Shelia Martin for Treasurer, seconded by Anne MacEachern. The motion carried and Shelia Martin was elected Treasurer for the ensuing year.

Regina Lyon nominated Ellis Merchant for the office of Trustee. A motion was made by Leonidas Zenonos that nominations cease and the Moderator be instructed to cast one ballot for Ellis Merchant for Trustee, seconded by Susan Penharlow. The motion carried and Ellis Merchant was elected Trustee for a three-year term (March 2027).

**Article 3:** Shall the Village compensate the following elected officials for 2024?  
*(These funds will be raised through operating budgets from the Village departments as allowed)*

Clerk – \$200

Collector of Delinquent Taxes – 8% of taxes collected

Treasurer – 1% of taxes collected

Trustee – \$1500

Anne MacEachern made a motion that the Clerk be paid \$210 for the ensuing year, seconded by Regina Lyon. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

Antoinne Eubanks made a motion that the Collector of Delinquent Taxes be paid 8% of taxes collected, seconded by Regina Lyon.

Discussion: David Snedeker noted that the 8% is of delinquent taxes collected, not 8% of all taxes.

There was no further discussion and the motion carried.

Fred Wiseman made a motion that the Treasurer be paid 1% of taxes collected, seconded by David Snedeker. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

Regina Lyon made a motion that the Trustees be paid \$1500, seconded by Jacqueline Laurion. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

**Article 4:** Shall the Village raise \$72,578 through taxes upon the grand list for the funds requested in the 2024 Annual Village Budget and the ensuing year, and direct the Trustees to assess a tax on the grand list sufficient to meet the same?  
*(See Highway Department Budget for assessment request by the Trustees)*

Antoinne Eubanks made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon.

Discussion: Susan Penharlow asked why there were increases to this budget.

Jacqueline Laurion made a motion that Crystal Carrier, who has been assisting with finances, be allowed to speak, seconded by Regina Lyon. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

Crystal Carrier advised that the increases were mostly due to salaries and the hiring of a Business Manager.

Paul Sicard asked about decreased rents for specific departments and Crystal Carrier advised that an analysis was done to ensure that rents are being allocated according to the department that is using the space. She also advised that office employees are now being allocated the same way, rather than distinguishing employees to specific departments.

Nathan Sicard stated he noticed that the capital reserves were decreased and the budget increased.

Crystal Carrier explained that the Village had to use reserve funds for a new furnace at the Barton Memorial Building and that it was very expensive.

Jacqueline Laurion noted that the furnace is now zoned and can more efficiently heat the building.

Nathan Sicard corrected himself and noted that there actually was no decrease in the capital reserves and that it was level funded.

Regina Lyon made a motion that the discussion cease, seconded by Ellis Merchant. The motion carried.

There was a voice vote for the Village to raise \$72,578 through taxes for the Village portion of the budget. The motion carried.

**Article 5:**

Shall the Village raise \$477,544 through taxes upon the grand list for the funds requested in the 2024 Annual Highway Budget and the ensuing year, and direct the Trustees to assess a tax on the grand list sufficient to meet the same?  
*(See Highway Department Budget for assessment request by the Trustees)*

Antoinette Eubanks made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon.

Discussion: David Snedeker asked that the board explain the increases.

Crystal Carrier explained that the increases were partly due to the purchase of a new truck (\$80,000), as the previous truck was no longer inspectable.

She further explained that the budget includes \$312,000 for the new salt and sand shed, which includes an anticipated revenue of \$238,000 from the USDA. If the USDA grant is not approved, the Board will have to revisit the topic and decide what the next steps will be.

Also included in the increase are the salaries for the Business Manager and DPW Worker positions.

The Village will now have 2 trucks and 2 employees to maintain the roads during the winter as the Vermont Agency of Transportation will no longer perform winter maintenance on Routes 5 and 16 within the Village limits. The addition of a DPW Worker also meant that there would be no need to contract with the Town, saving the Village approximately \$34,000.

Crystal Carrier further advised that approximately \$126,000 was used for storm damage repairs from the flood in July. There is a loss in the 2023 actual because the Village has not yet received FEMA funding for the repairs, and that it may be received in 2024, but 2025 is more likely. Bills had to be paid and funds from the reserves were used. When the FEMA funding is received, the board will decide what to do with it. Duck Pond Road is also undergoing repairs from the storm in December.

Paul Sicard asked which funds were used for the \$80,000 truck.

Crystal Carrier advised that \$50,000 was from the reserve fund and that the balance was financed. Some additional equipment (plow, etc.) will also need to be purchased.

Paul Sicard asked why the Trustees did not consider loans or bonds instead of raising tax revenue.

David Snedeker asked whether any grants were applied for to offset the cost of the salt and sand shed. He pointed out that Barton Village is the lowest income municipality in Orleans County and that the Village should be eligible for a grant that would pay 75%. When informed by Crystal Carrier that a grant had been

applied for, he asked what would happen if the grant was not awarded. Crystal Currier stated that the process would have to be re-started/re-evaluated.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to cease discussion and called the question, seconded by Paul Sicard. The motion carried.

Leonidas Zenonos asked for a paper ballot. The voters completed the paper ballot and the outcome of the vote was 14 yes and 22 no. The motion failed.

**Article 6:** Shall the Village raise \$126,378 through taxes and user fees for water department capital debt retirement and water capital reserve funds, such funds will be used for major repairs, replacement, and upgrades to the structural components of the Village water system?  
*(See Water Department Budget for assessment request by the Trustees)*

Antoinette Eubanks made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon.

Discussion: Leonidas Zenonos asked for an explanation about the rising cost.

Crystal Currier advised that there has been a loss of income since 2022 and that the department cannot continue to operate this way. She stated that fees are not where they should be.

Nathan Sicard stated that the Village's contract with Utility Partners ended in 2021 and that the Village hired a part-time employee to operate the water facility. When the operator began, he discovered that extensive repairs to the plant were required, therefore there are many pending projects at the plant. Nathan Sicard inquired why taxes were increased instead of spreading the expenses over the next few years.

Crystal Currier stated that the facility operator's hours have been scaled back for CY 2024. Vera LaPorte, the Business Manager, will be keeping him on task while still trying to repair as much as possible before there is an emergency.

Nathan Sicard made a motion to amend Article 6 to level fund the taxes collected for 2024 to \$68,804.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to call the question for the amendment to level fund the water department taxes collected to \$68,804 seconded by Paul Sicard. The motion carried.

Leonidas made a motion for a voice vote to approve the water department taxes at \$68,804 for the water department capital debt retirement and water capital reserve funds, seconded by Paul Sicard. The motion carried.

**Article 7:**

Shall the Village raise \$65,540 through taxes and user fees for wastewater department capital debt retirement and wastewater capital reserve funds, such funds will be used for major replacement and upgrades to the structural components of the Village wastewater system?

*(See Wastewater Department Budget for assessment request by the Trustees)*

David Snedeker made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon.

Discussion: Nathan Sicard advised that he supports this article but cautioned that this department is going to need much more funding in the future. He stated that Barton Village has spent a lot of money on old equipment.

Regina Lyon advised that the Village is working with an engineer as the wastewater facility did not pass an inspection performed by the State in April 2023. The State is not happy as nothing has been done since a 2008 evaluation where the Village was instructed to fix a variety of issues. She stated that a bond vote for the funding required to make the necessary repairs will more than likely happen in the future. She also advised that the wastewater facility has had an appropriately licensed operator since January 2024.

David Snedeker mentioned the Municipal Technical Grant as a possible source of funding and Regina Lyon advised that the Trustees are already looking into it. David Snedeker stated that the Village was headed in the right direction.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to cease discussion and vote that the village raise \$65,540 in taxes for the wastewater department capital debt retirement and wastewater capital reserve fund, seconded by Regina Lyon. The motion carried.

**Article 8:** Shall the Village appropriate the sum of \$5,000 in funds to be used as matching funds for grant applications that demonstrate direct benefit to the Village of Barton community and/or its residents with requirements for said appropriation to be a report of income and expense and instruct the Trustees to assess a tax sufficient to meet the same?

Regina Lyon made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Ellis Merchant.

Discussion: David Snedeker inquired about the balance of the fund. Crystal Carrier advised that there was \$57,173.09 in the account.

David Snedeker stated that the Village could use those funds for some of the outstanding projects.

George Komendat asked what the funds were for. Regina Lyon advised that sometimes grants require a matching amount of funds and that is what they could be used for.

Nathan Sicard advised that the fund was started around 10 years ago and that Rural Development was the only organization that has asked to use the funds, and that it had something to do with the Pierce Block.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon. The motion carried.

**Article 9:** Shall the Village collect its taxes due and payable within 60 days without discount, with interest to accrue on delinquent taxes at the maximum rate allowed by law and an 8% penalty assessed on all delinquent taxes and postmarks not acceptable as payment dates?

Paul Sicard made a motion to approve the article as proposed, seconded by Fred Wiseman. There was no discussion and the motion carried.

**Article 10:** Shall the Village authorize the Trustees to spend an amount not to exceed 3/12<sup>th</sup> of the 2024 annual budget article adopted at the 2023 annual meeting during the period from January 1, 2025 until the annual village meeting held in March 2025?

Regina Lyon made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Ellis Merchant.

Discussion: David Snedeker reminded the Trustees that 3/12<sup>th</sup> of the budget would be less the highway and difference in the water amounts previously voted on.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to cease the discussion and accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon. The motion carried.

**Article 11:** To act upon any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Paul Sicard asked if the Trustees wanted to suspend the meeting to a different date so that they could come back with a new highway budget or if they wanted to adjourn. Leonidas Zenonos stated that they would only be returning to vote on the highway budget.

Regina Lyon advised that since the Trustees had to work on the new budget, they would warn a special meeting to vote on it.

Leonidas Zenonos stated that he felt that it would be in the best interest of the Village to continue the winter maintenance contract with the Town.

Paul Sicard and Richard Sicard asked about the letter from the State stating that they were not interested in taking ownership of US Route 5 and VT Route 16 within Village boundaries. Regina Lyon had the letter on hand and stated that she would provide a copy to Richard Sicard at his request.

Marjorie Brown asked if there could be a discussion about the electric department.

Regina Lyon advised that the 2023 budget for the electric department was originally projected to be in the negative, but ended in the positive. She stated that in 2023 VPPSA entered into a 5-year contract with Orleans Village to provide operational services for the electric department and that they are doing a fantastic job. Regina Lyon also said that many electric accounts that were not accurate are now being billed correctly, which has helped.

Antoinne Eubanks stated that she was thankful for all the work done by the Village. She stated that the electric department has been very efficient and did



an excellent job during the recent storms. Regina Lyon agreed that they have been doing a phenomenal job.

Nathan Sicard stated that he was on the Board of Trustees for 9 years and that the new Board has taken things in a completely different direction. He stated that almost every department was bankrupt 10 years ago. He advised that he tried to keep things simple for the Village and to work on one thing at a time. He stated that the new approach has been to rebuild the Village and make it better, which results in more expense. He asked what the cost was going to be, as Barton Village's tax rate is about \$3 while neighboring towns and villages are around \$2. He would like to be able to attract families to live here and to be competitive with other communities. He stated that the last property appraisal was in 2012 and people will be in for a shock when the next one happens.

Paul Sicard asked if any of the Trustees were on the VPPSA Board of Directors. Regina Lyon stated that Vera LaPorte, the Business Manager, was on the VPPSA Board and that Denis Fortin was the alternate. Paul Sicard asked if there was a conflict of interest with any members of the Board of Trustees being on the VPPSA Board of Directors, and Marilyn Prue stated that she was an alternate for Orleans Village.

Ellis Merchant stated that he wanted to speak as a Village resident and not as a Trustee. He stated that he had been on the Board before and was glad to step up last year and rejoin. He stated that the Village had always had electric, water, and sewer departments. He stated that everything has increased in price and that it should be expected that the Village will have to do the same.

He stated that the three Trustees are doing their best and that they meet bi-weekly, and that the only Village resident who has attended the open meetings was David Billado. He asked that those who have hard questions and who have rejected the Village budgets step up and become part of the solution, and not criticize the work that they have done to create the best budgets that they could. He asked for assistance from Village residents.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to accept the article as proposed, seconded by Regina Lyon.

**Article 15:** To adjourn.

Leonidas Zenonos made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Regina Lyon. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.

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Shelia Martin, Barton Village Clerk

Acceptance of aforewritten minutes by the Trustees:

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Regina Lyon

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Marilyn Prue

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Ellis Merchant

Acceptance of the aforewritten minutes by the Moderator:

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Jacqueline Laurion